CHRONOWAR™

KAZUMASA TAKAYAMA

DARK HORSE COMICS®

Manga

CHRONOWAR
4 OF 9

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CHRONOWAR

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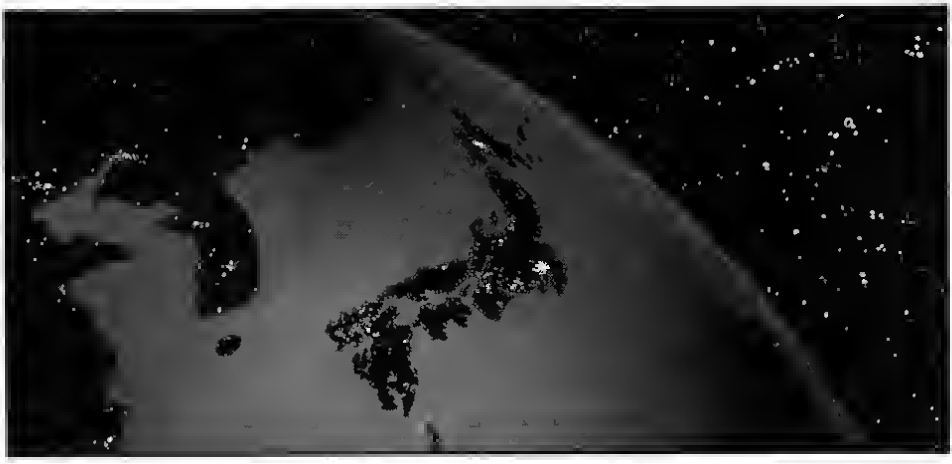
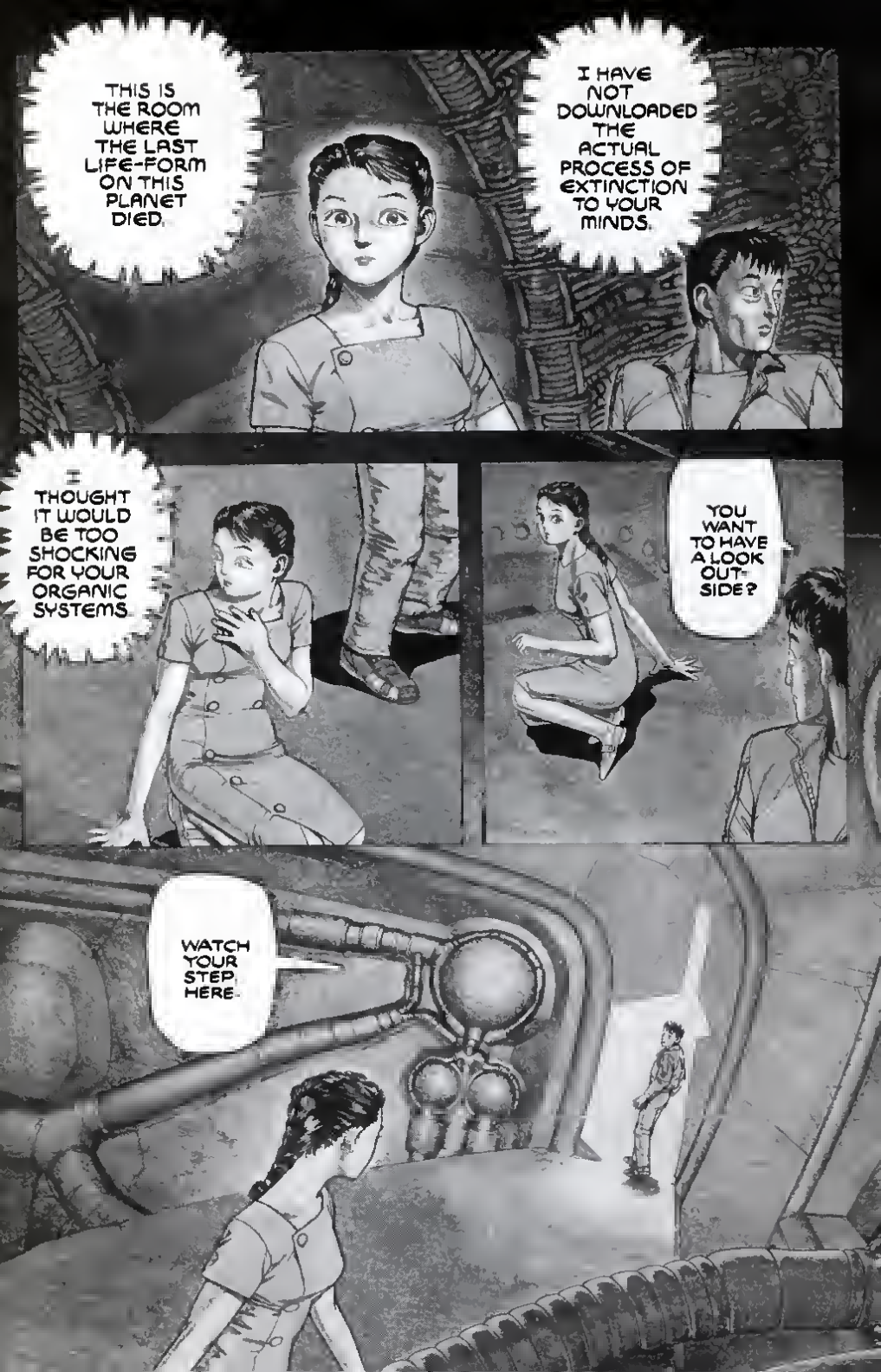
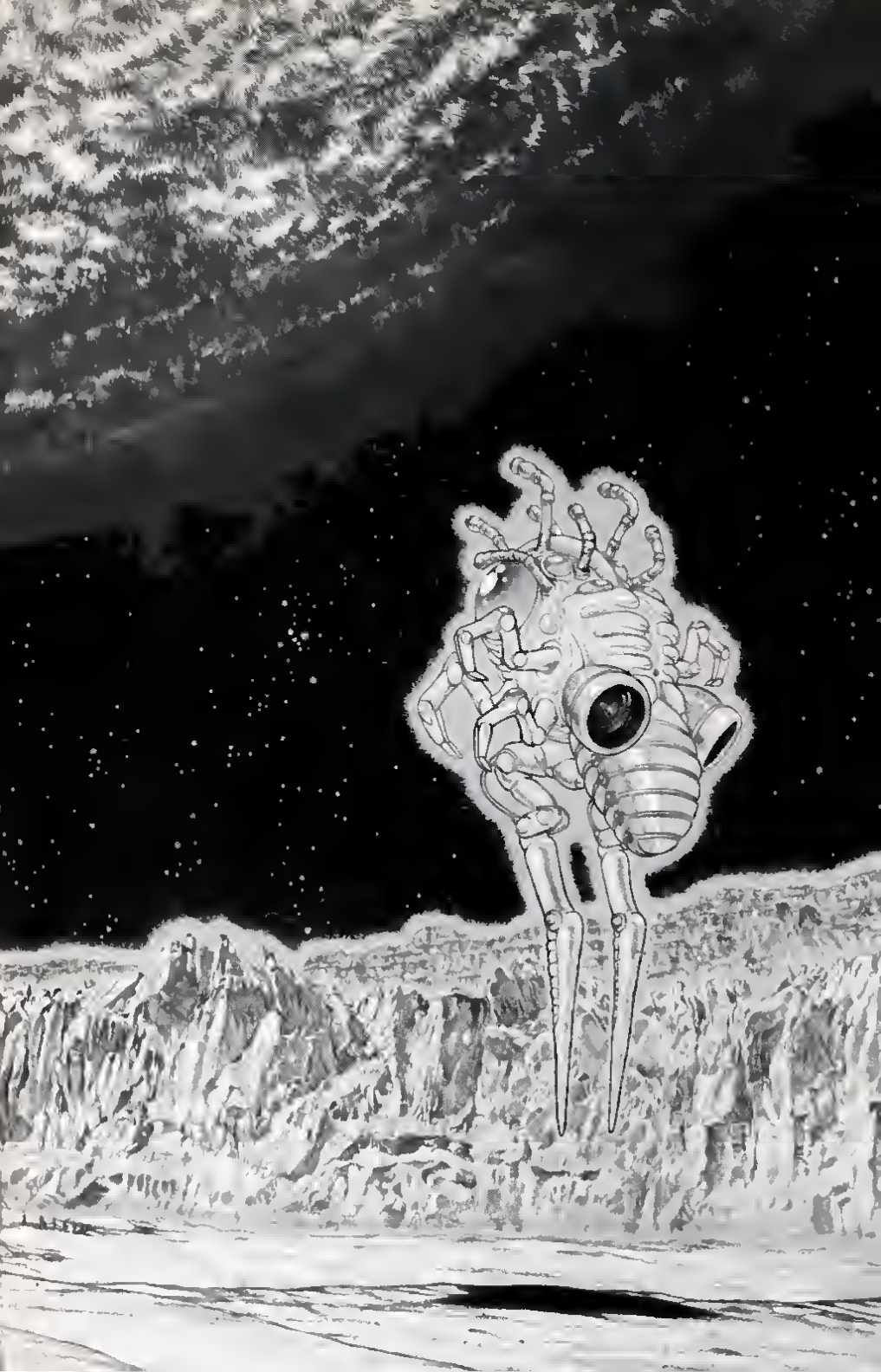
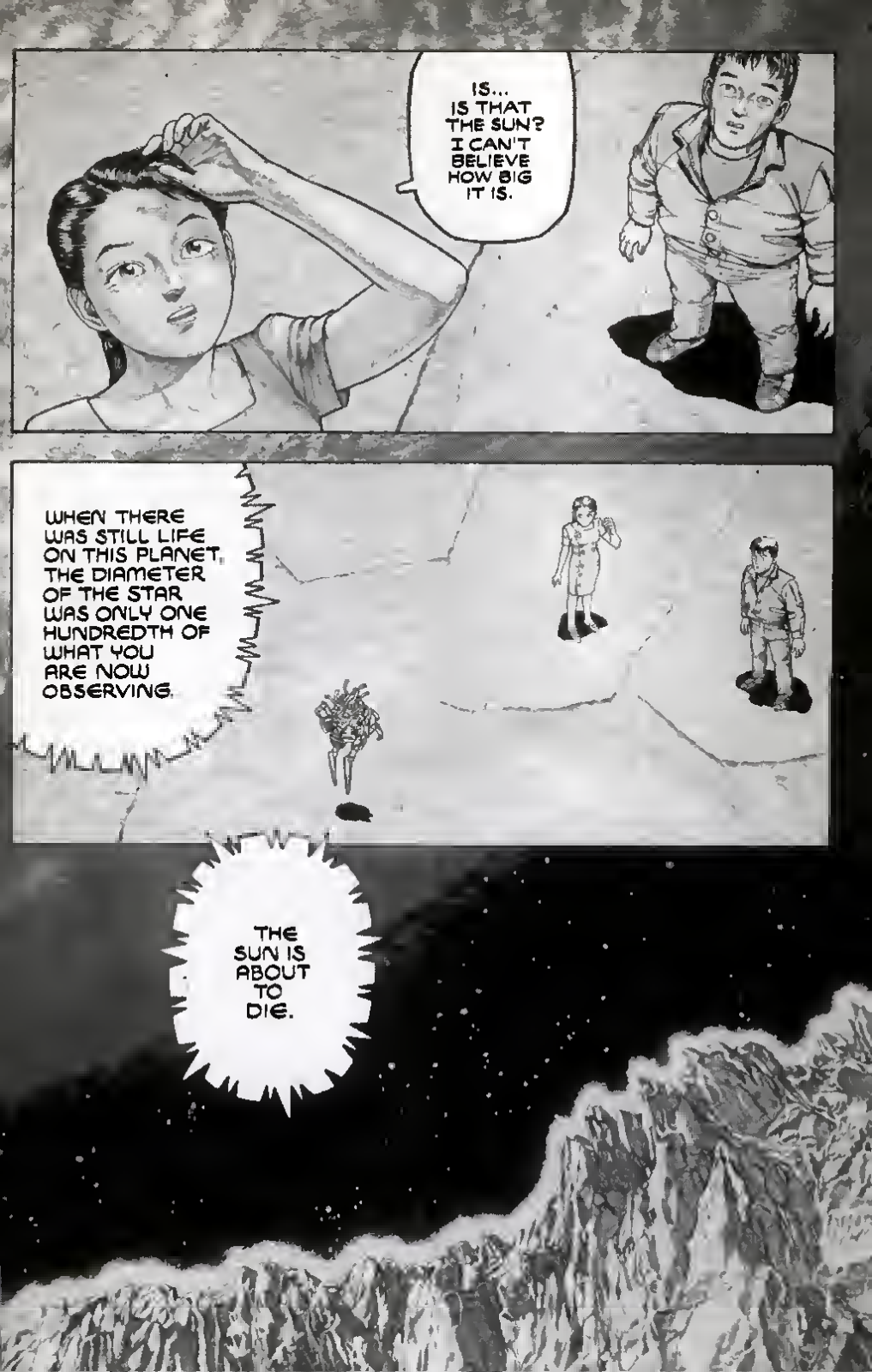
Chronowar #4, November 1996. Published by Dark Horse Comics, Inc. 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222. Chronowar original art and story © 1995 Kazumasa Takayama. First published in Japan in 1995 by Kodansha Ltd. Tokyo. English translation rights arranged through Kodansha Ltd. English translation and lettering copyright ©1996 Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics, Inc. The Chronowar English logo™ Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics Inc. All other material copyright ©1996 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced by any means without written permission from the copyright holders. The stories, characters, and incidents in this publication are entirely fictional. Concrete® & © Paul Chadwick. A Decade of Dark Horse™ is a trademark and Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse logo are registered trademarks of Dark Horse Comics Inc. All rights reserved. PRINTED IN CANADA.

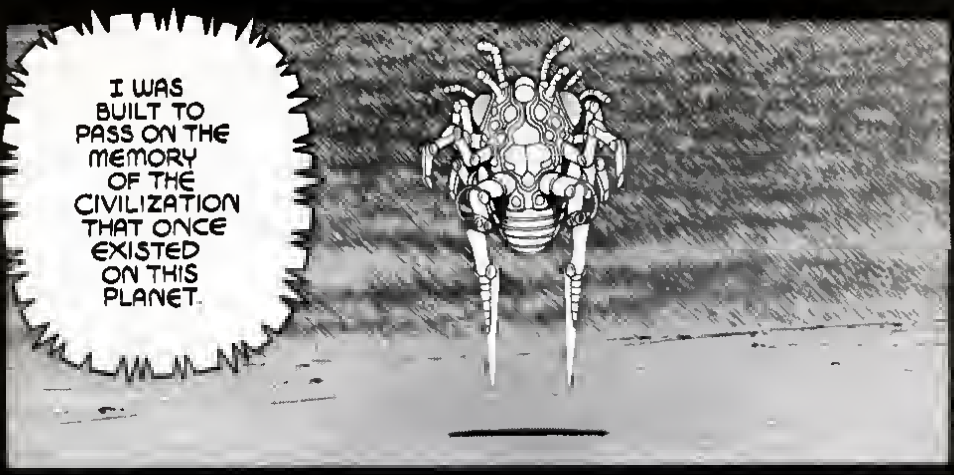


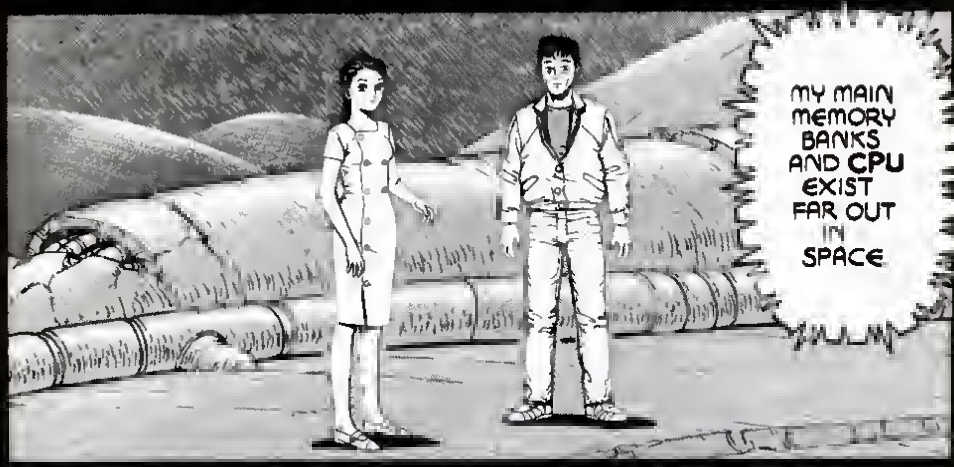
WAKE UP!
COME ON!
I D-DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE IN THIS PLACE...
HUH...?

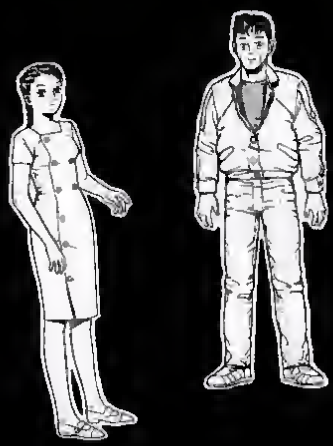

THIS IS THE ROOM WHERE THE LAST LIFE-FORM ON THIS PLANET DIED.
I HAVE NOT DOWNLOADED THE ACTUAL PROCESS OF EXTINCTION TO YOUR MINDS.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE TOO SHOCKING FOR YOUR ORGANIC SYSTEMS.
YOU WANT TO HAVE A LOOK OUTSIDE?
WATCH YOUR STEP HERE.

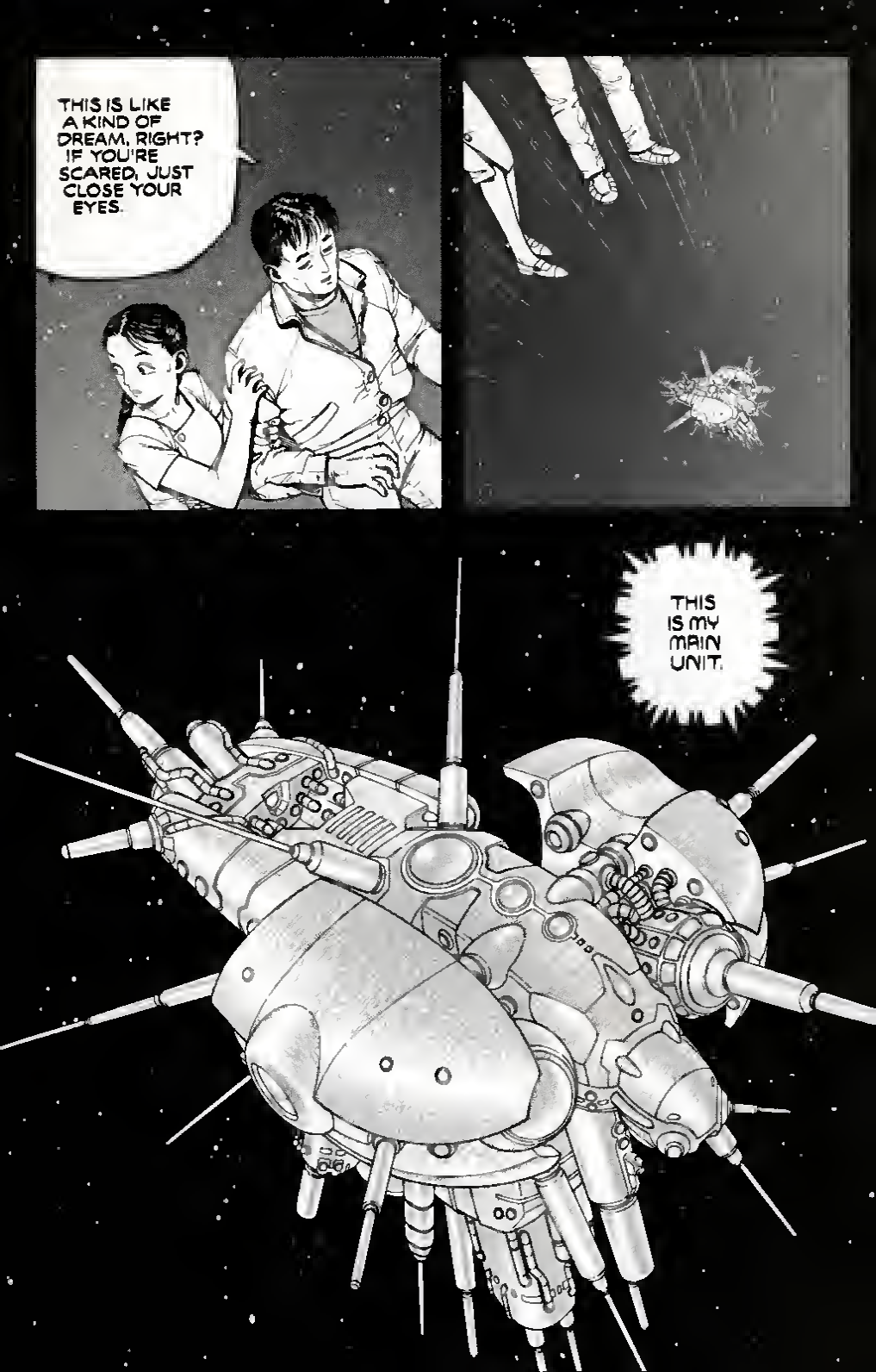


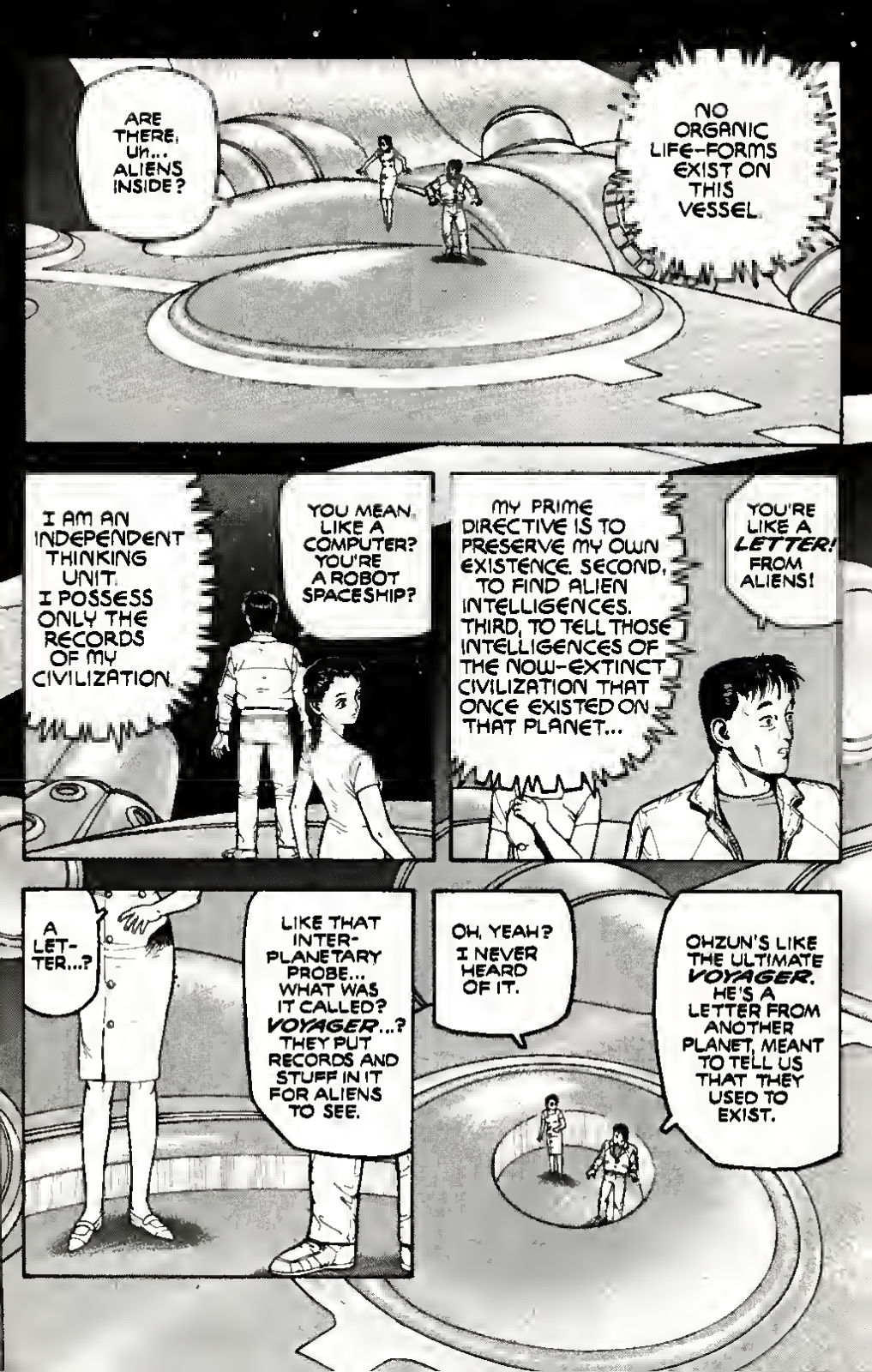

IS... IS THAT THE SUN? I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW BIG IT IS.
WHEN THERE WAS STILL LIFE ON THIS PLANET, THE DIAMETER OF THE STAR WAS ONLY ONE HUNDREDTH OF WHAT YOU ARE NOW OBSERVING.
THE SUN IS ABOUT TO DIE.

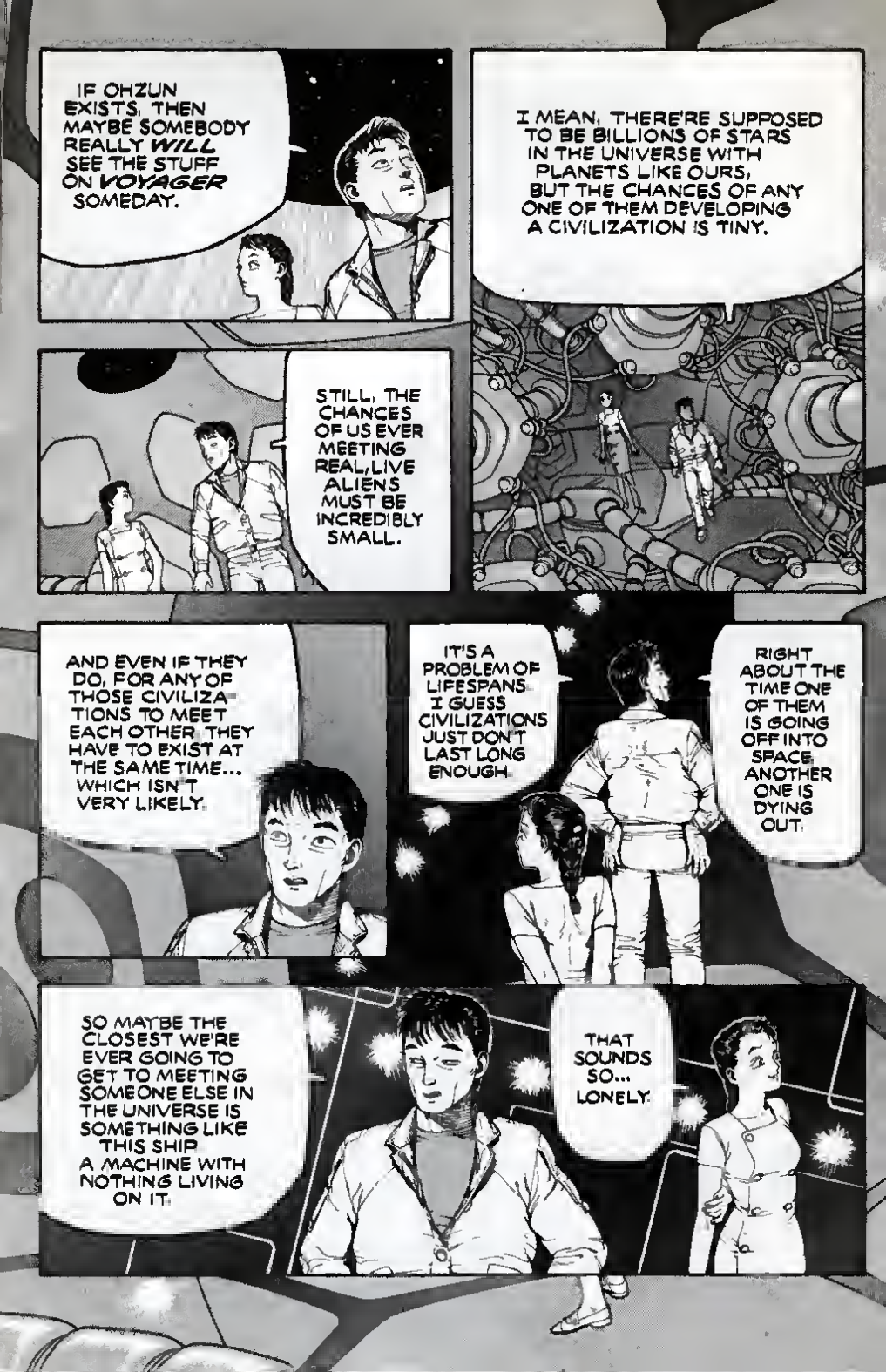

I WAS BUILT TO PASS ON THE MEMORY OF THE CIVILIZATION THAT ONCE EXISTED ON THIS PLANET.

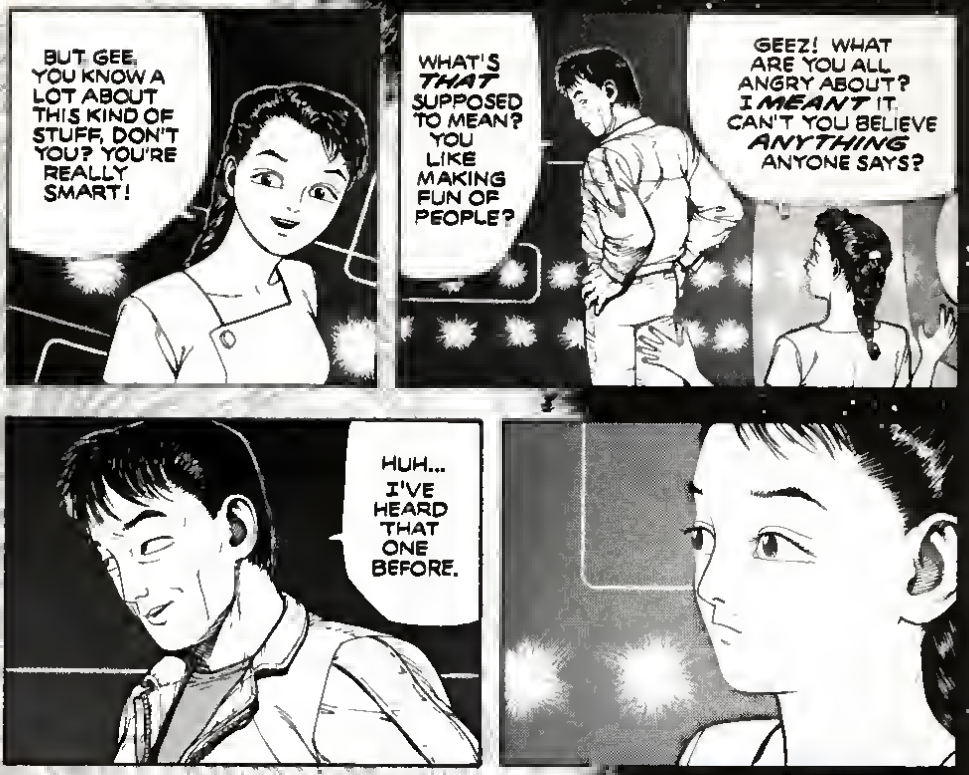

MY MAIN MEMORY BANKS AND CPU EXIST FAR OUT IN SPACE.

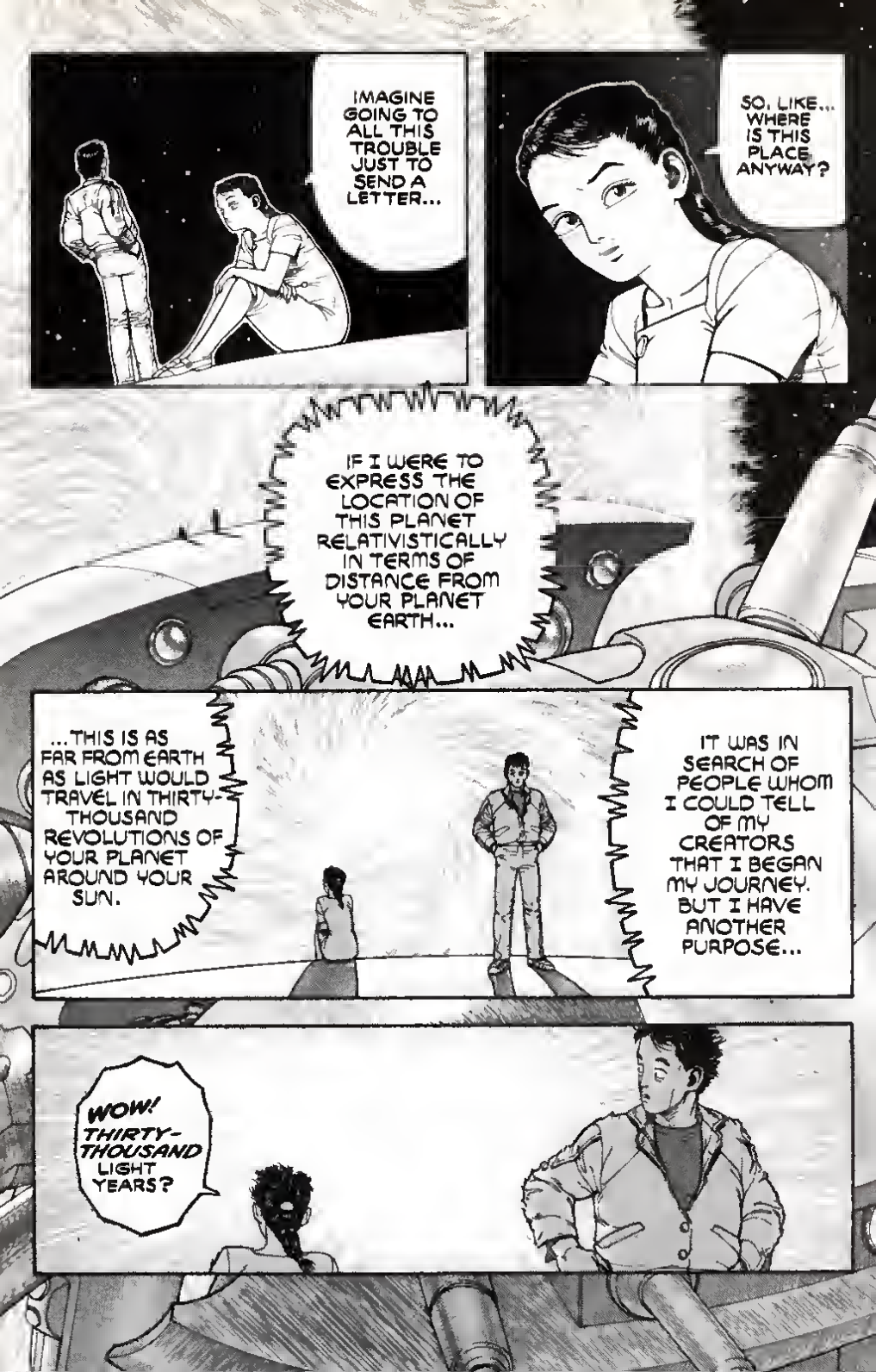


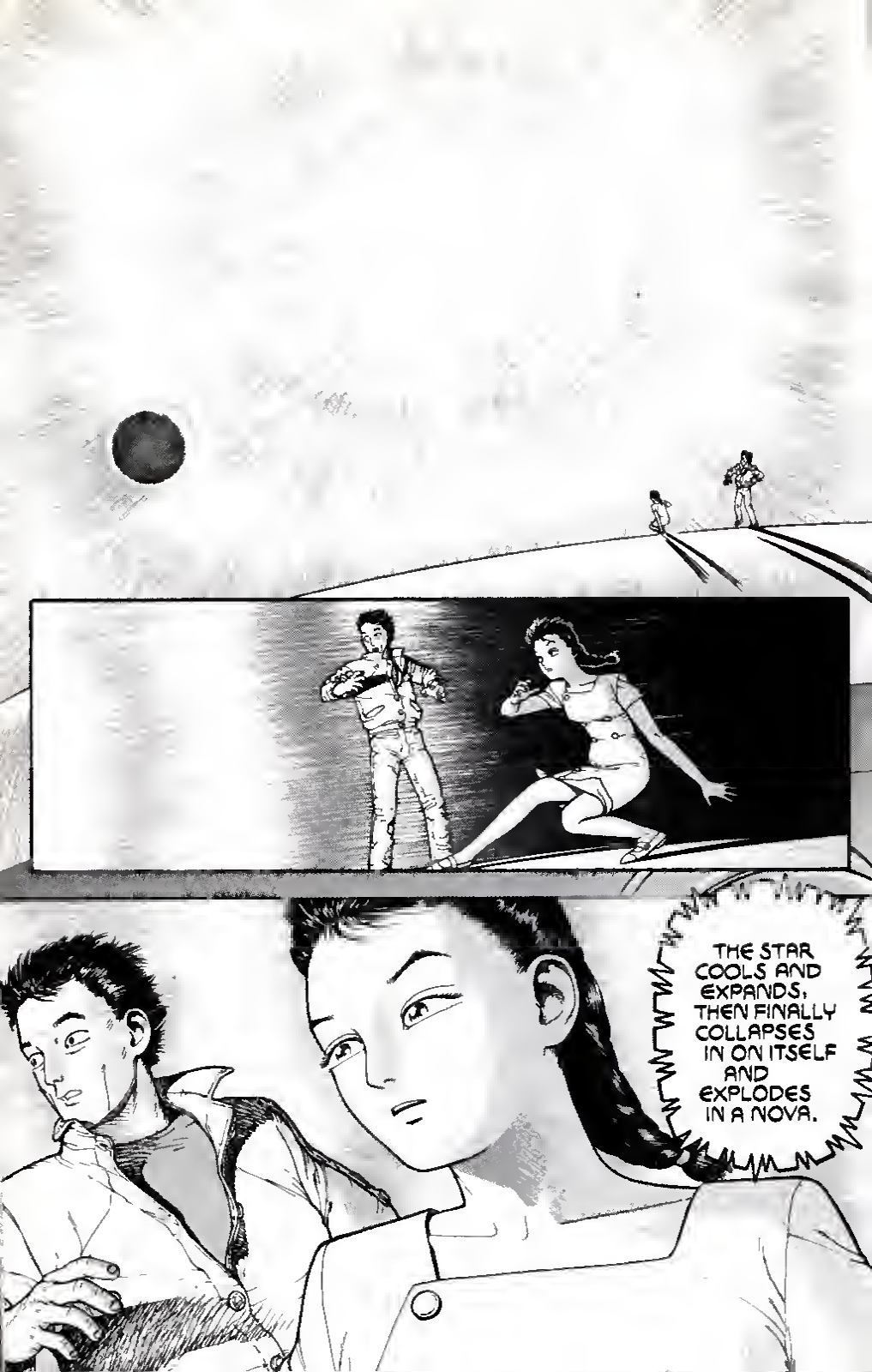

THIS IS LIKE A KIND OF DREAM, RIGHT? IF YOU'RE SCARED, JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES.
THIS IS MY MAIN UNIT.

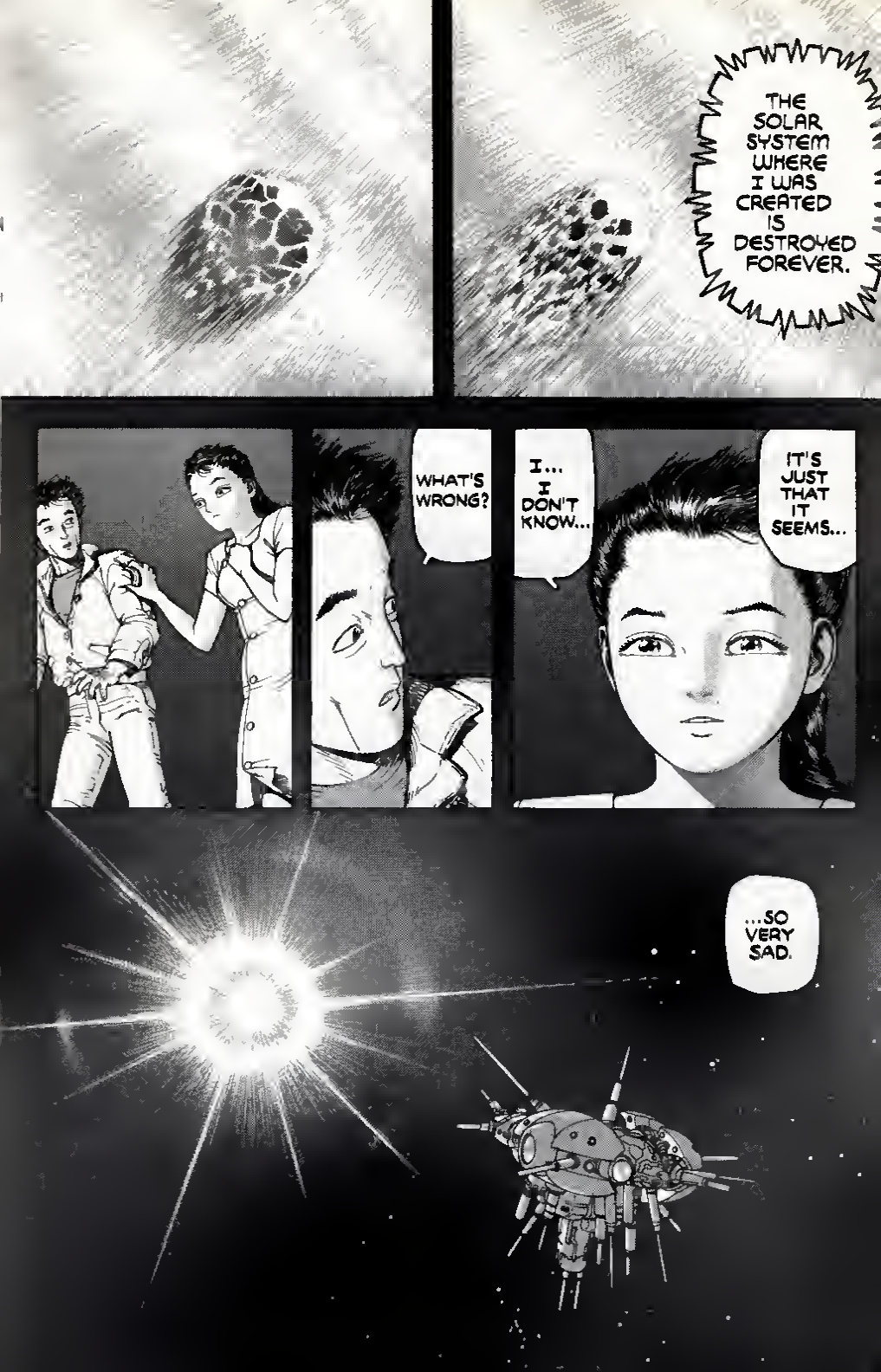

ARE THERE, UH... ALIENS INSIDE?
NO ORGANIC LIFE-FORMS EXIST ON THIS VESSEL.
I AM AN INDEPENDENT THINKING UNIT. I POSSESS ONLY THE RECORDS OF MY CIVILIZATION.
YOU MEAN, LIKE A COMPUTER? YOU'RE A ROBOT SPACESHIP?
MY PRIME DIRECTIVE IS TO PRESERVE MY OWN EXISTENCE. SECOND, TO FIND ALIEN INTELLIGENCES. THIRD, TO TELL THOSE INTELLIGENCES OF THE NOW-EXTINCT CIVILIZATION THAT ONCE EXISTED ON THAT PLANET...
YOU'RE LIKE A *LETTER!* FROM ALIENS!
A LET-TER...?
LIKE THAT INTER-PLANETARY PROBE... WHAT WAS IT CALLED? *VOYAGER*...? THEY PUT RECORDS AND STUFF IN IT FOR ALIENS TO SEE.
OH, YEAH? I NEVER HEARD OF IT.
OHZUN'S LIKE THE ULTIMATE *VOYAGER*. HE'S A LETTER FROM ANOTHER PLANET, MEANT TO TELL US THAT THEY USED TO EXIST.

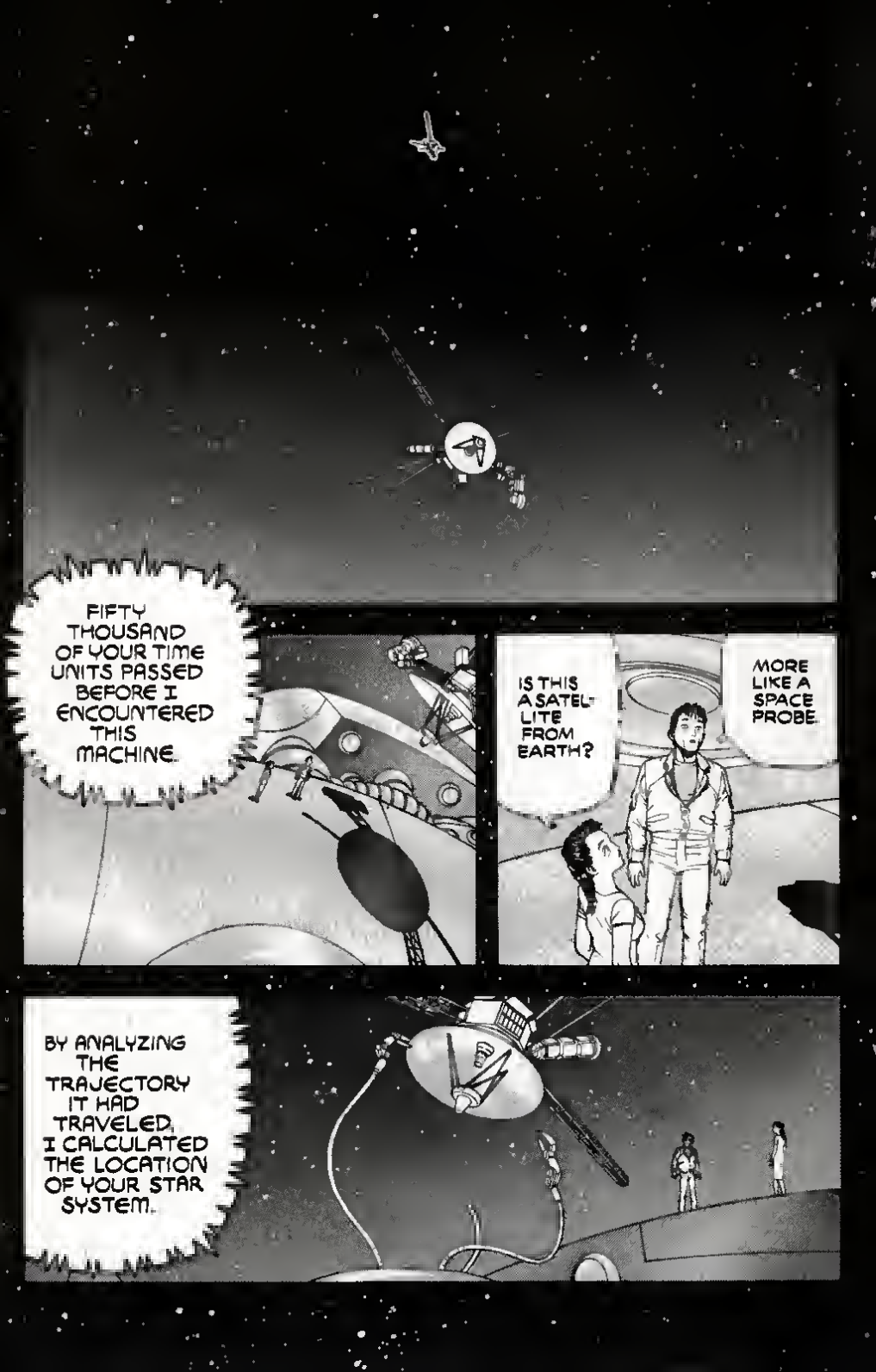

IF OHZUN EXISTS, THEN MAYBE SOMEBODY REALLY *WILL* SEE THE STUFF ON *VOYAGER* SOMEDAY.
I MEAN, THERE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE BILLIONS OF STARS IN THE UNIVERSE WITH PLANETS LIKE OURS, BUT THE CHANCES OF ANY ONE OF THEM DEVELOPING A CIVILIZATION IS TINY.
STILL, THE CHANCES OF US EVER MEETING REAL, LIVE ALIENS MUST BE INCREDIBLY SMALL.
AND EVEN IF THEY DO, FOR ANY OF THOSE CIVILIZATIONS TO MEET EACH OTHER THEY HAVE TO EXIST AT THE SAME TIME... WHICH ISN'T VERY LIKELY.
IT'S A PROBLEM OF LIFESPANS I GUESS CIVILIZATIONS JUST DON'T LAST LONG ENOUGH.
RIGHT ABOUT THE TIME ONE OF THEM IS GOING OFF INTO SPACE, ANOTHER ONE IS DYING OUT.
SO MAYBE THE CLOSEST WE'RE EVER GOING TO GET TO MEETING SOMEONE ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE IS SOMETHING LIKE THIS SHIP A MACHINE WITH NOTHING LIVING ON IT.
THAT SOUNDS SO... LONELY.

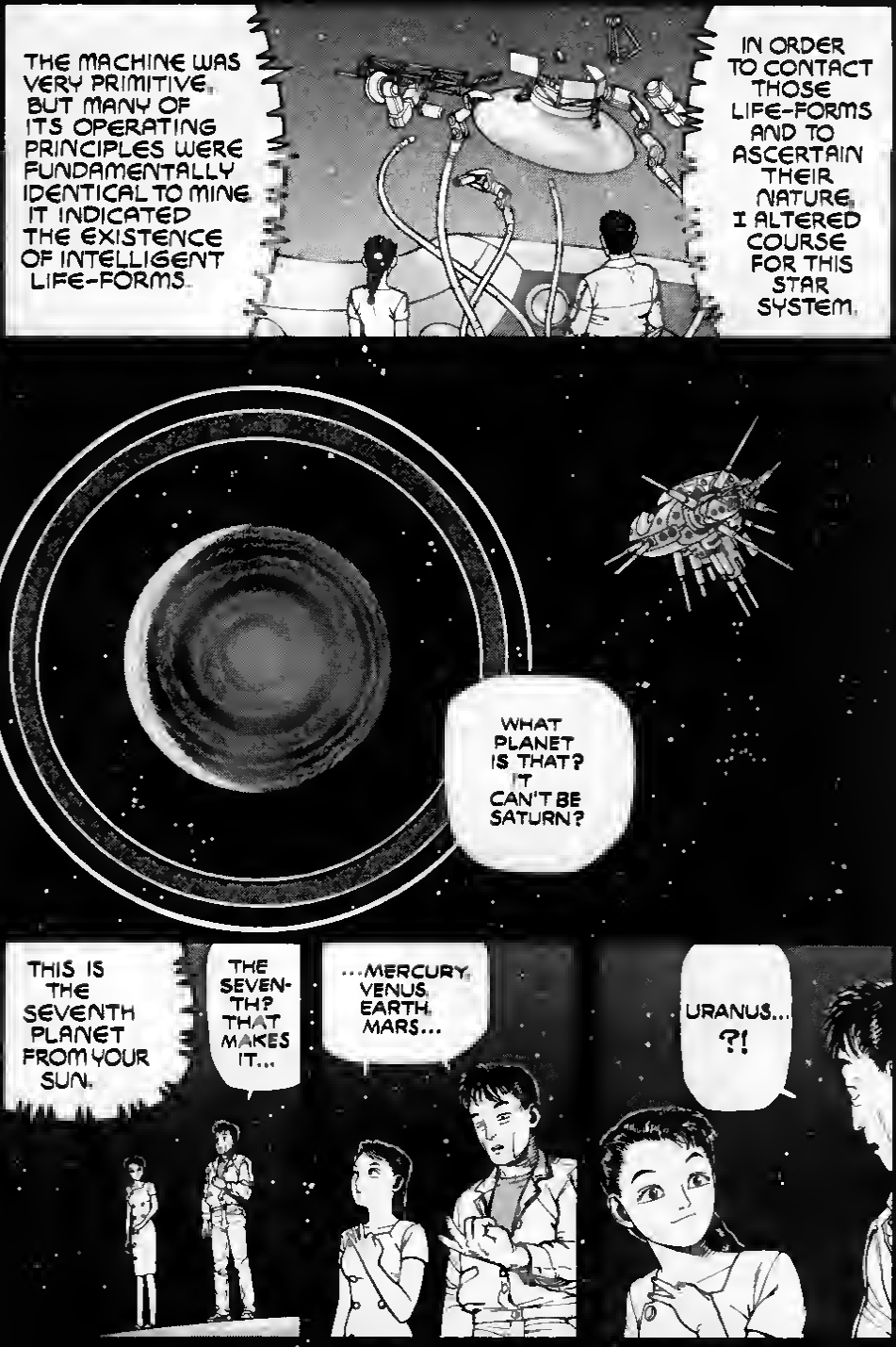

BUT GEE, YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS KIND OF STUFF, DON'T YOU? YOU'RE REALLY SMART!
WHAT'S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN? YOU LIKE MAKING FUN OF PEOPLE?
GEEZ! WHAT ARE YOU ALL ANGRY ABOUT? *I MEANT* IT. CAN'T YOU BELIEVE *ANYTHING* ANYONE SAYS?
HUH... I'VE HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE.

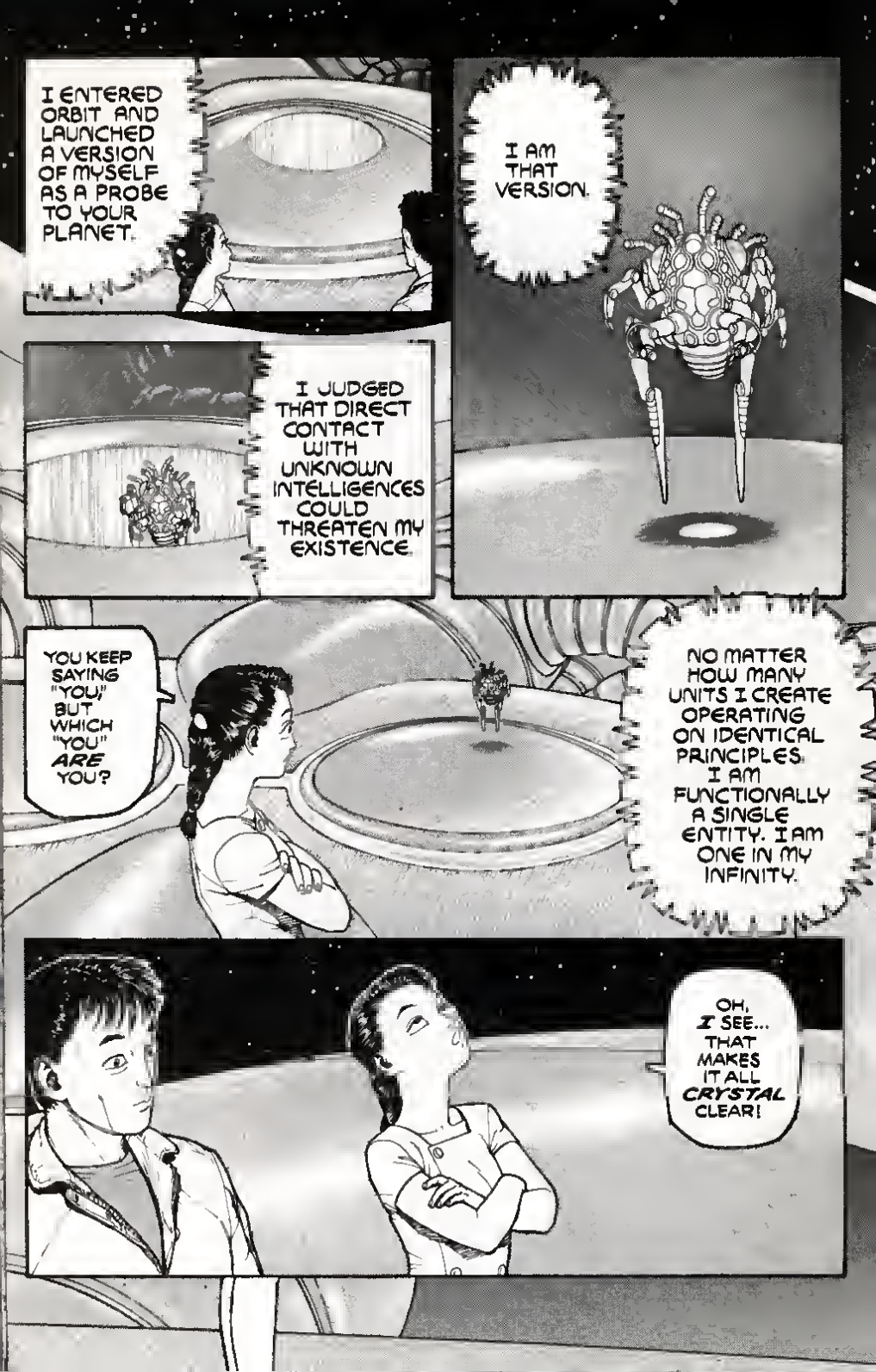

IMAGINE GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE JUST TO SEND A LETTER...
SO, LIKE... WHERE IS THIS PLACE, ANYWAY?
IF I WERE TO EXPRESS THE LOCATION OF THIS PLANET RELATIVISTICALLY IN TERMS OF DISTANCE FROM YOUR PLANET EARTH...
...THIS IS AS FAR FROM EARTH AS LIGHT WOULD TRAVEL IN THIRTY-THOUSAND REVOLUTIONS OF YOUR PLANET AROUND YOUR SUN.
IT WAS IN SEARCH OF PEOPLE WHOM I COULD TELL OF MY CREATORS THAT I BEGAN MY JOURNEY. BUT I HAVE ANOTHER PURPOSE...
WOW! THIRTY-THOUSAND LIGHT YEARS?


THE STAR COOLS AND EXPANDS, THEN FINALLY COLLAPSES IN ON ITSELF AND EXPLODES IN A NOVA.

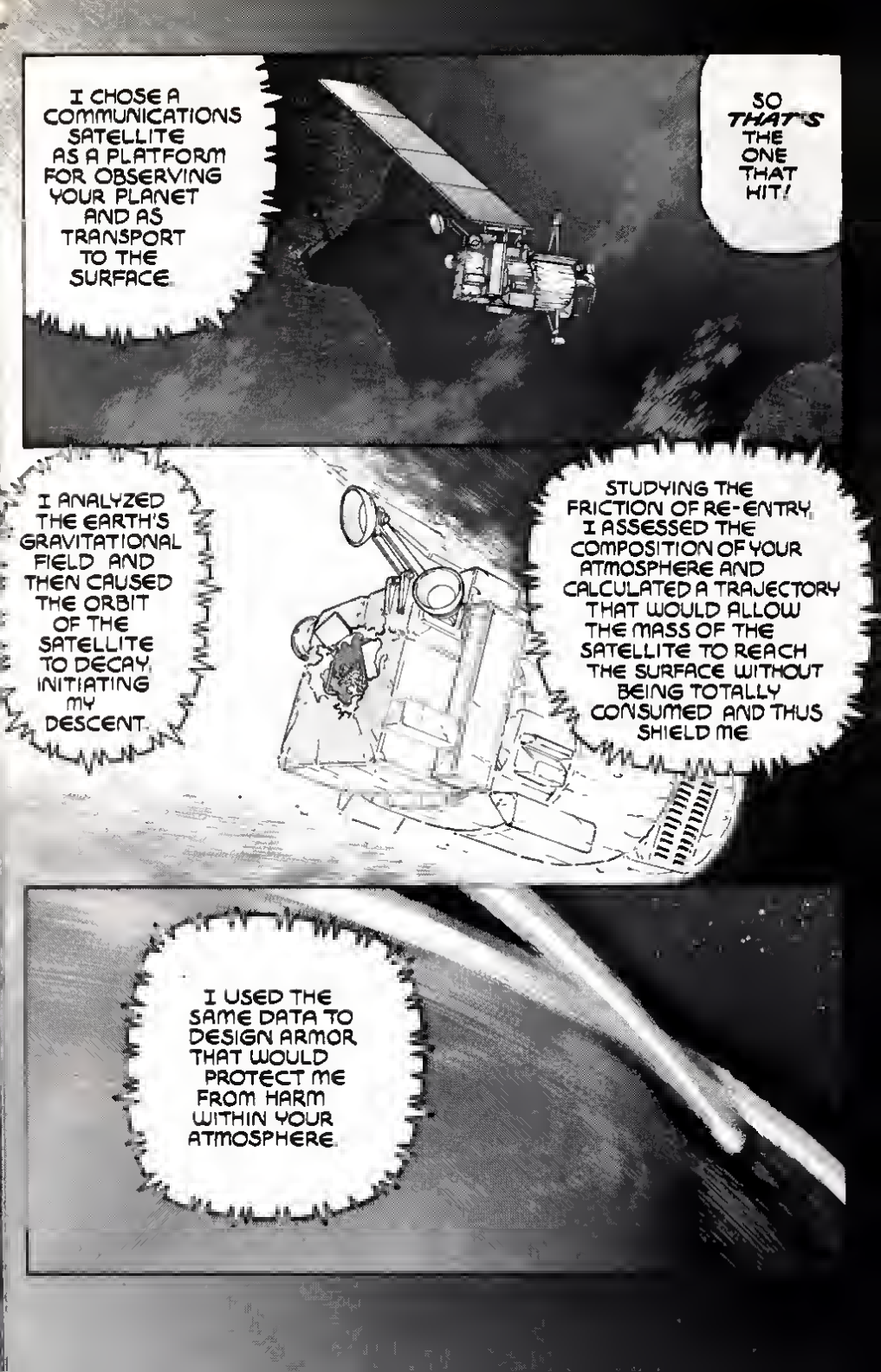

THE SOLAR SYSTEM WHERE I WAS CREATED IS DESTROYED FOREVER.
WHAT'S WRONG?
I... I DON'T KNOW...
IT'S JUST THAT IT SEEMS...
...SO VERY SAD.

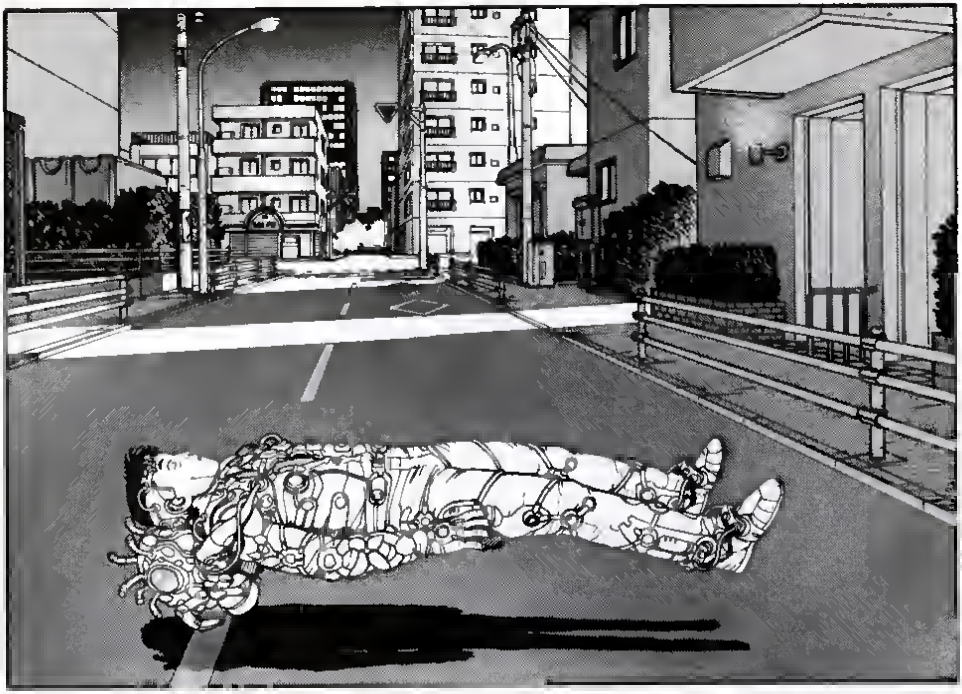

FIFTY THOUSAND OF YOUR TIME UNITS PASSED BEFORE I ENCOUNTERED THIS MACHINE.
IS THIS A SATELLITE FROM EARTH?
MORE LIKE A SPACE PROBE.
BY ANALYZING THE TRAJECTORY IT HAD TRAVELED, I CALCULATED THE LOCATION OF YOUR STAR SYSTEM.

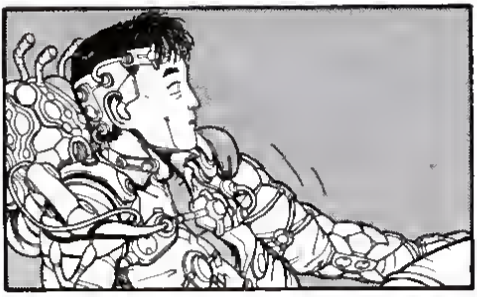

THE MACHINE WAS VERY PRIMITIVE, BUT MANY OF ITS OPERATING PRINCIPLES WERE FUNDAMENTALLY IDENTICAL TO MINE. IT INDICATED THE EXISTENCE OF INTELLIGENT LIFE-FORMS.
IN ORDER TO CONTACT THOSE LIFE-FORMS AND TO ASCERTAIN THEIR NATURE, I ALTERED COURSE FOR THIS STAR SYSTEM.
WHAT PLANET IS THAT? IT CAN'T BE SATURN?
THIS IS THE SEVENTH PLANET FROM YOUR SUN.
THE SEVEN-TH? THAT MAKES IT...
...MERCURY, VENUS, EARTH, MARS...
URANUS...?!

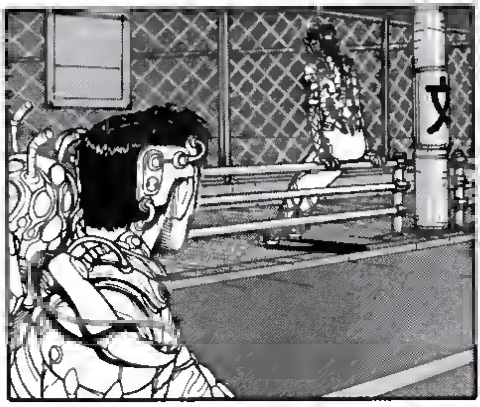

I ENTERED ORBIT AND LAUNCHED A VERSION OF MYSELF AS A PROBE TO YOUR PLANET.
I AM THAT VERSION.
I JUDGED THAT DIRECT CONTACT WITH UNKNOWN INTELLIGENCES COULD THREATEN MY EXISTENCE.
YOU KEEP SAYING "YOU," BUT WHICH "YOU" *ARE* YOU?
NO MATTER HOW MANY UNITS I CREATE OPERATING ON IDENTICAL PRINCIPLES, I AM FUNCTIONALLY A SINGLE ENTITY. I AM ONE IN MY INFINITY.
OH, *I* SEE... THAT MAKES IT ALL ***CRYSTAL*** CLEAR!

IS THIS THE SATELLITE THAT FELL ON TOKYO?
NO. THIS IS A RELAY STATION I GENERATED TO TRANSMIT DATA TO MY MAIN UNIT NEAR URANUS.
I DETECTED LARGE VOLUMES OF BROADBAND ELECTRO-MAGNETIC RADIATION EMITTED FROM THE EARTH
HEY, THAT'S JAPAN!
I SELECTED THE LARGEST SOURCE OF RADIANT LIGHT FOR MY LANDING ZONE

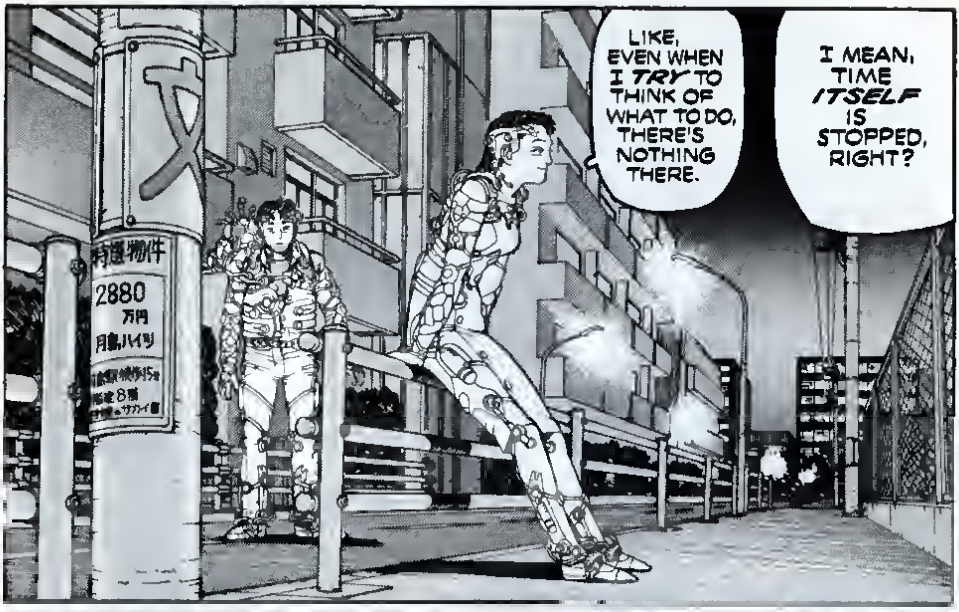

I CHOSE A COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE AS A PLATFORM FOR OBSERVING YOUR PLANET AND AS TRANSPORT TO THE SURFACE.
SO THAT'S THE ONE THAT HIT!
I ANALYZED THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD AND THEN CAUSED THE ORBIT OF THE SATELLITE TO DECAY, INITIATING MY DESCENT.
STUDYING THE FRICTION OF RE-ENTRY, I ASSESSED THE COMPOSITION OF YOUR ATMOSPHERE AND CALCULATED A TRAJECTORY THAT WOULD ALLOW THE MASS OF THE SATELLITE TO REACH THE SURFACE WITHOUT BEING TOTALLY CONSUMED AND THUS SHIELD ME
I USED THE SAME DATA TO DESIGN ARMOR THAT WOULD PROTECT ME FROM HARM WITHIN YOUR ATMOSPHERE.

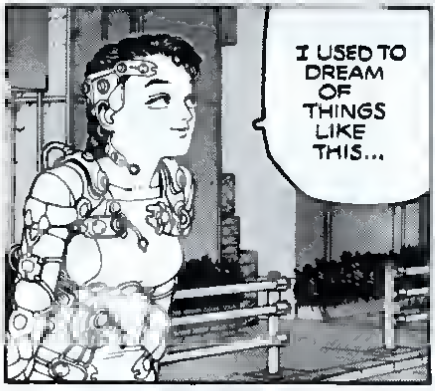


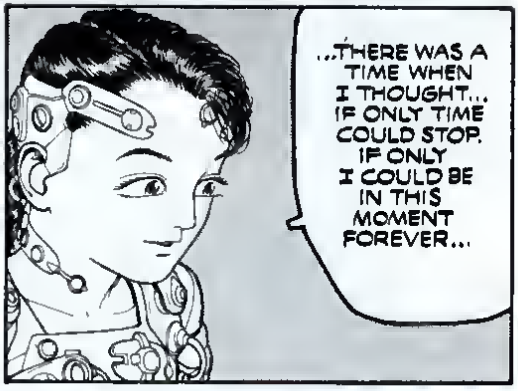


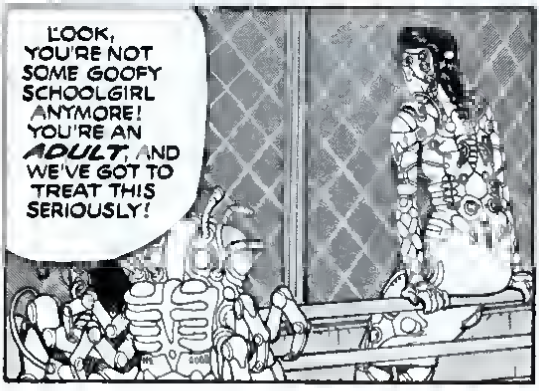


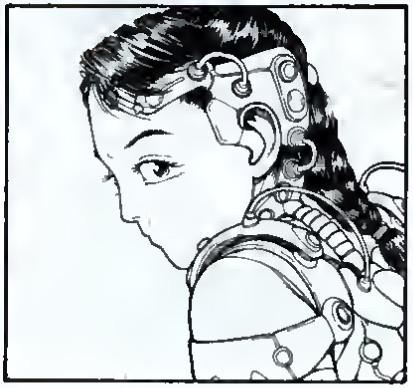
IT'S ALL SO DIFFERENT FROM EVERYTHING I KNOW. I FEEL LIKE MY MIND IS A *TOTAL* BLANK.

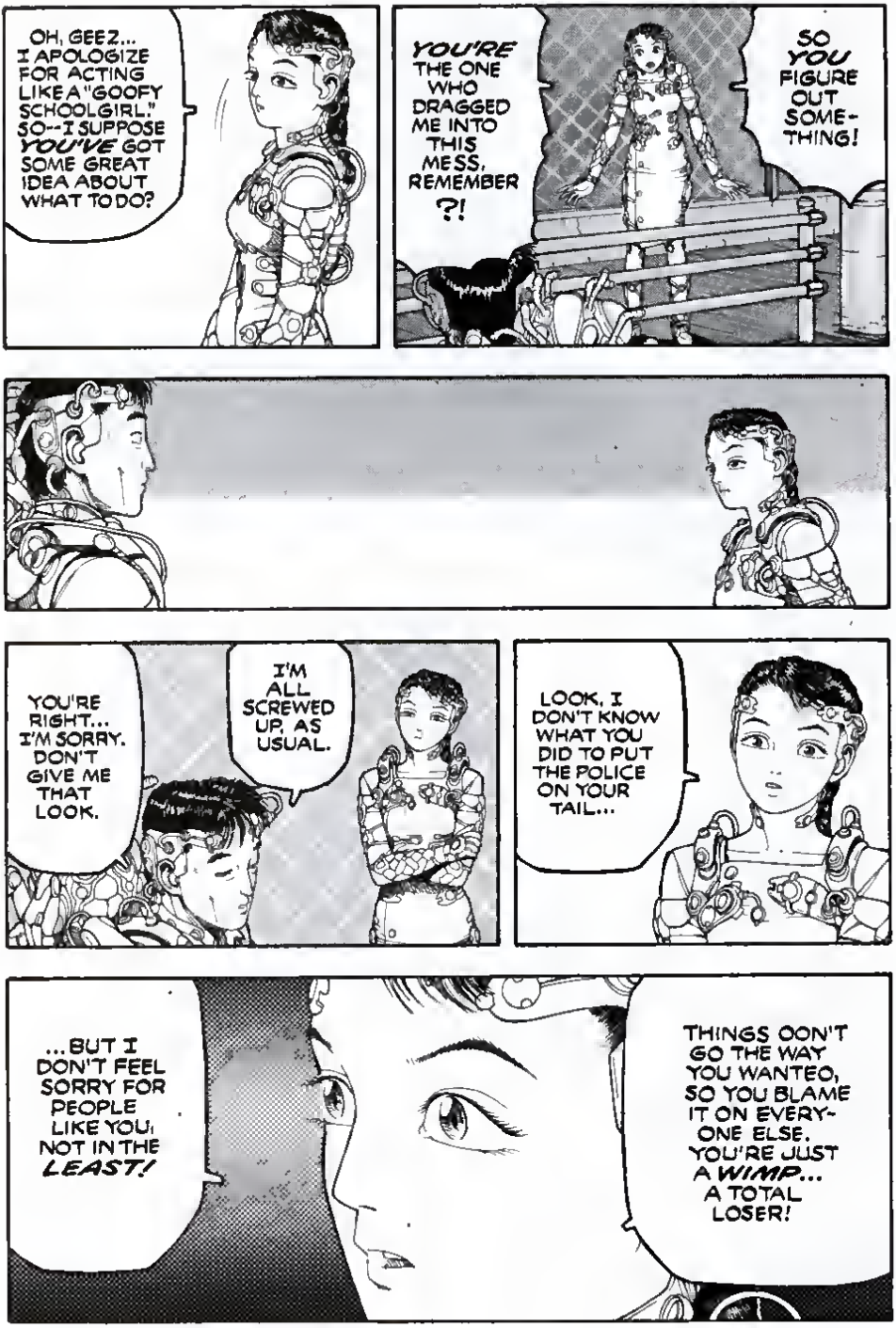

I MEAN, TIME ITSELF IS STOPPED, RIGHT?
LIKE, EVEN WHEN I TRY TO THINK OF WHAT TO DO, THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
2880
万円
月島ハイツ

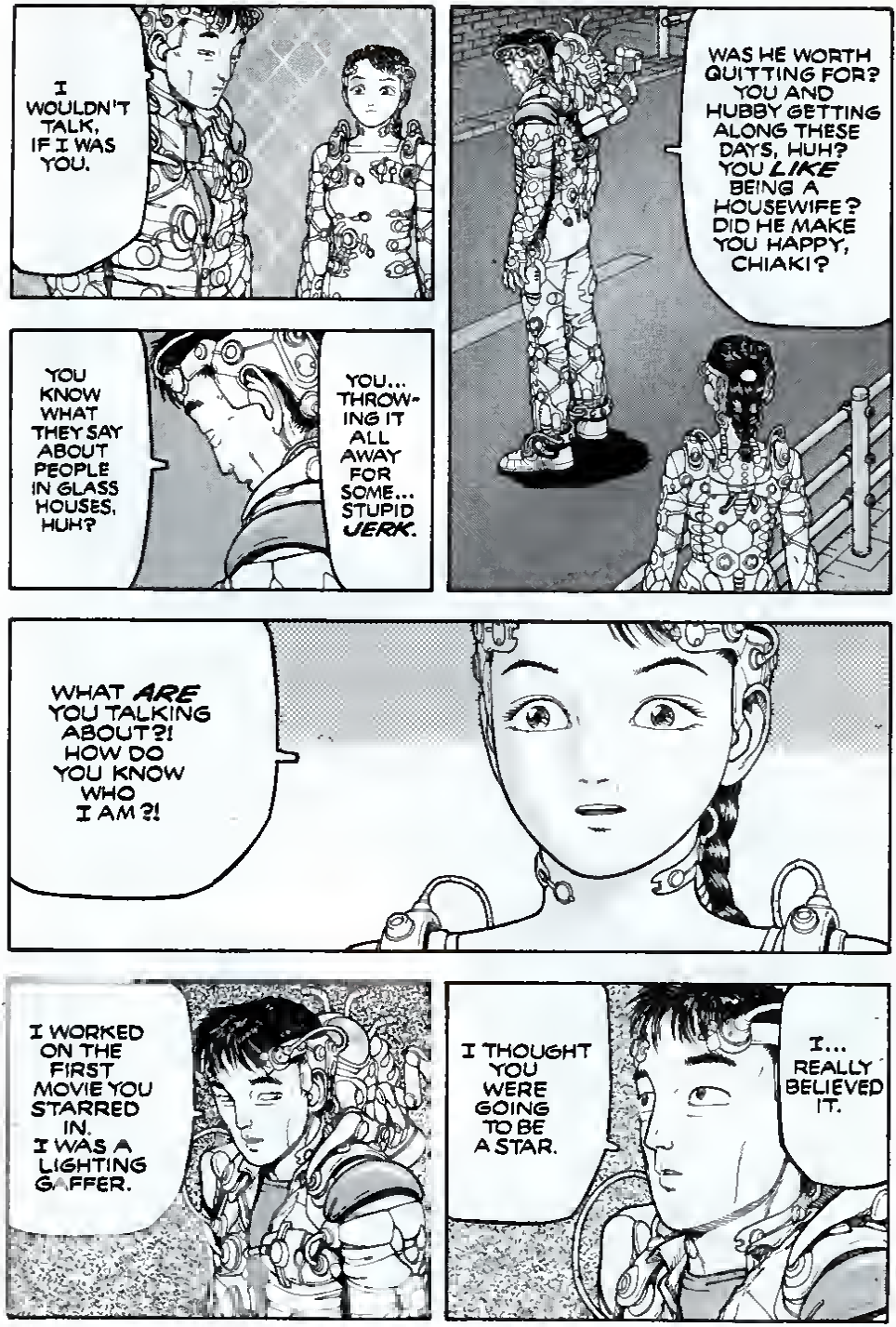

I USED TO DREAM OF THINGS LIKE THIS...


...THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT... IF ONLY TIME COULD STOP. IF ONLY I COULD BE IN THIS MOMENT FOREVER...

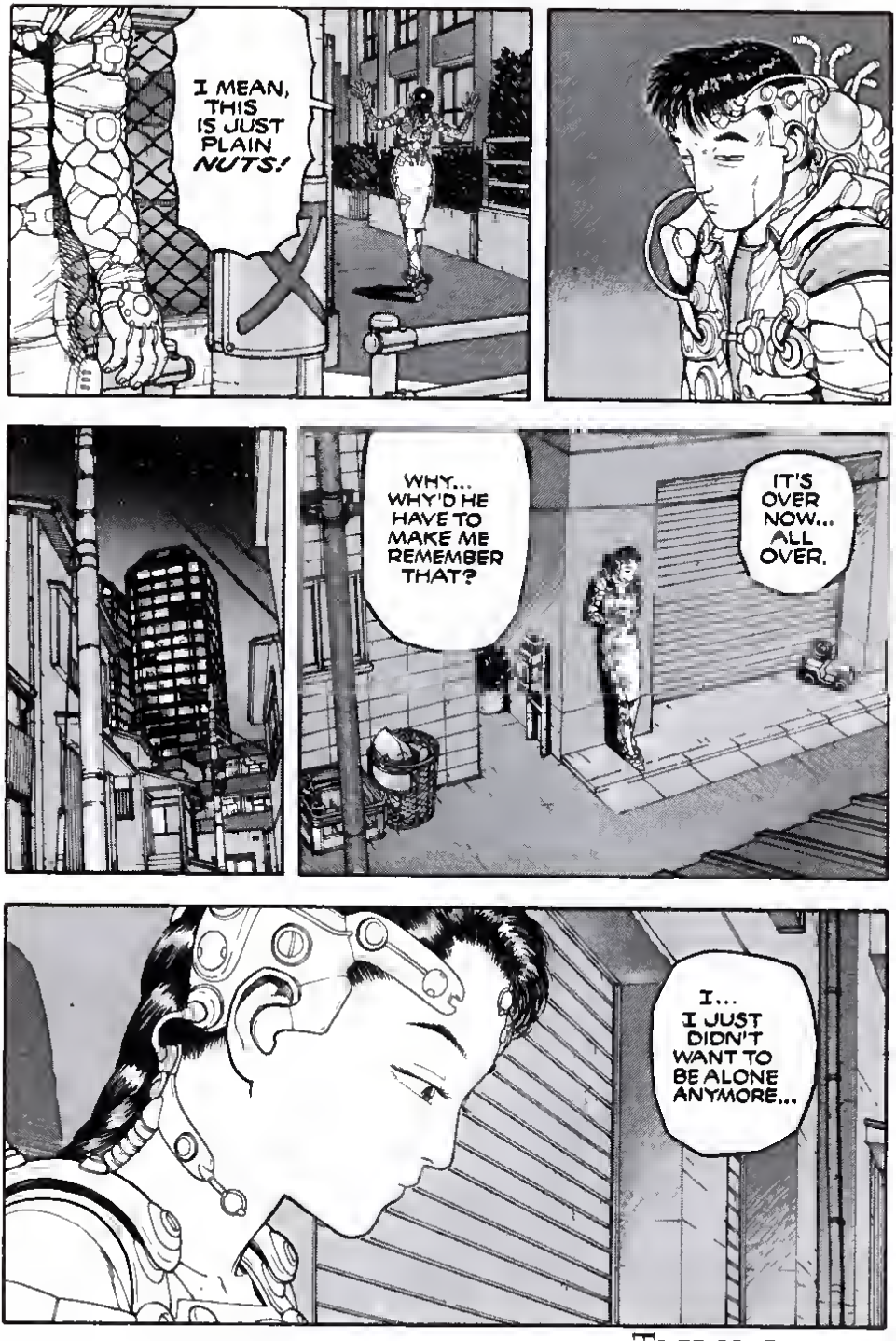

LOOK, YOU'RE NOT SOME GOOFY SCHOOLGIRL ANYMORE! YOU'RE AN ADULT, AND WE'VE GOT TO TREAT THIS SERIOUSLY!




OH, GEEZ... I APOLOGIZE FOR ACTING LIKE A "GOOFY SCHOOLGIRL." SO--I SUPPOSE YOU'VE GOT SOME GREAT IDEA ABOUT WHAT TO DO?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DRAGGED ME INTO THIS MESS, REMEMBER ?!
SO YOU FIGURE OUT SOME-THING!
YOU'RE RIGHT... I'M SORRY. DON'T GIVE ME THAT LOOK.
I'M ALL SCREWED UP, AS USUAL.
LOOK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO PUT THE POLICE ON YOUR TAIL...
...BUT I DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU, NOT IN THE LEAST!
THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY YOU WANTED, SO YOU BLAME IT ON EVERY-ONE ELSE. YOU'RE JUST A WIMP... A TOTAL LOSER!


I WOULDN'T TALK, IF I WAS YOU.
WAS HE WORTH QUITTING FOR? YOU AND HUBBY GETTING ALONG THESE DAYS, HUH? YOU *LIKE* BEING A HOUSEWIFE? DID HE MAKE YOU HAPPY, CHIAKI?
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT PEOPLE IN GLASS HOUSES, HUH?
YOU... THROW-ING IT ALL AWAY FOR SOME... STUPID *JERK*.
WHAT *ARE* YOU TALKING ABOUT?! HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?!
I WORKED ON THE FIRST MOVIE YOU STARRED IN. I WAS A LIGHTING GAFFER.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BE A STAR.
I... REALLY BELIEVED IT.

WHAT ON EARTH... I DON'T REMEMBER--
IT WAS A LONG, LONG TIME AGO.
OH, BROTHER... THIS IS FUNNY! YOU MEET FANS IN THE CRAZIEST PLACES!
HA HA!
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO LAUGH OR CRY!


I MEAN, THIS IS JUST PLAIN NUTS!
WHY... WHY'D HE HAVE TO MAKE ME REMEMBER THAT?
IT'S OVER NOW... ALL OVER.
I... I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO BE ALONE ANYMORE...

TO BE CONTINUED!